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HOW  
Practice the Pianoforte.

SPECULATIONS AND ADVICE

BY

H. EHRLICH,

Author of C. TAUSIG'S DAILY STUDIES.

TRANSLATED

BY

ELIZA M. WILEY,

*Teacher of the Piano in Vassar College.*

Price, 30 Cents.

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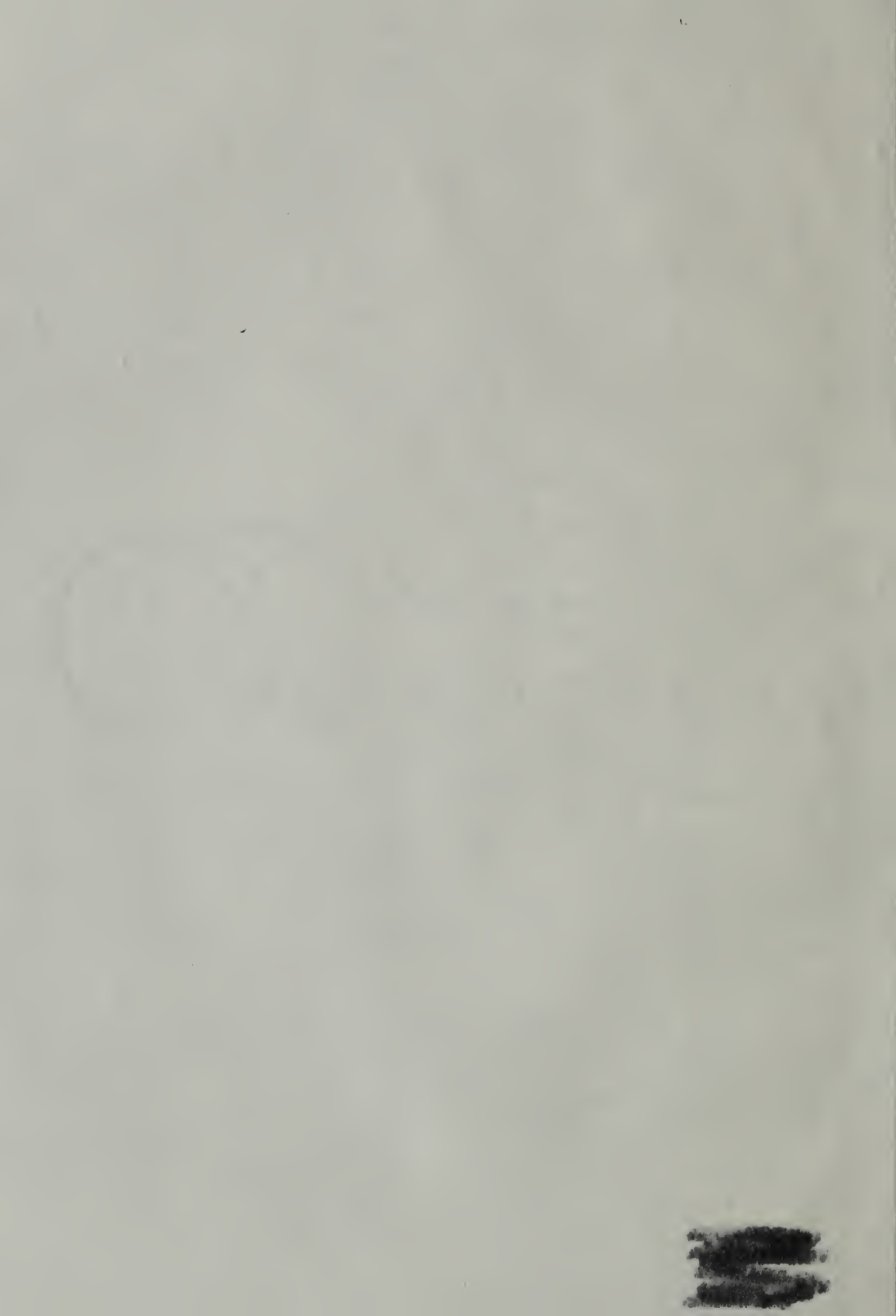
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THIS work by no means aims to present a new method of piano playing in general, or to supersede or oppose any method whatsoever. It is rather designed to form *a supplement to all methods*, and to direct the attention of unprejudiced professional musicians to a manner of *practicing, not of execution*, which till now has not been tried, and with which the author has attained the best results both in his own case and in that of his pupils. At the beginning it naturally presents some difficulties, but it affords, within a brief period, the surest means by which the player may watch the position of his hand and wrist and obtain control of them in the most varied positions and situations, in legato or staccato playing of octaves and double trills. It affords the surest means also for the formation of a correct method of fingering, which indeed is only to be attained through a correct position of the hand, and it is precisely in this last mentioned direction, that is, in the independent formation of the finger-



ing, that the author has often obtained surprising results with his scholars.

Every teacher, every pupil, has proved by experience how difficult it is to regulate the position of the fingers, the hand, the wrist and the arm in such a manner, that each of these members acts independently of all the others. Often the practice of long years on the part of the pupil and the continual attention of the teacher are necessary in order to accomplish this purpose. All kinds of machines, instruments, hand guides, etc., have been invented for promoting the control of the position of the hand. They may undoubtedly offer some advantages, but in their use there is always the danger that the learner accustoms himself too much to the instrument, and after it is taken away a long time is necessary before he can execute independently what was easy to him with the hand guide or some similar mechanical aid. The task which the author has proposed to himself is to establish this independence at the very outset without the aid of any instrument. The method of practicing which he here describes prevents from the very beginning every false position of the fingers, and especially of the wrist, and every troublesome movement of the arm. It

may be employed even by beginners—of course with great care and moderation; by more advanced pupils (those who have received instruction for a year and a half or two years) with perfect certainty and success. But always, even by those who have made great progress, the proper degree of moderation should be strictly observed and should be prescribed for the private practice of the pupil.

While the author communicates this method to professional musicians, teachers and pupils, he must emphasize in the most decided manner and frequently repeat that it has nothing whatever to do with *prescribing a rule for teaching*, but is merely an important supplementary aid in *practicing*, which holds the same relation to study in general, that gymnastics hold to the ordinary movements of daily life. Gymnastic exercise does not teach any one to walk, to bow, or to dance and move in society with propriety, quietness and grace; it does not lend to the countenance, or to the mien an especial expression; but it develops every separate muscle of the body to such an extent that perfect symmetry with the perfect co-operation of all the powers is established, and the gymnast overcomes with ease much

that would be difficult or even impossible to the powerful but unskilled man. The method here laid down has this additional resemblance to gymnastics, that it is only of real value when employed to a moderate degree, and with a slow movement. For the practice of gymnastics develops and strengthens the muscles, invigorates the health and lends great firmness to all the movements : so soon however as a certain proper moderation is exceeded, it leads to exhaustion and flagging, and often compels the gymnast to give up all further exercise. The method indicated by me, in connection with the practice of the "Daily-Studies" by Tausig-Ehrlich, strengthens the fingers and wrist to the utmost, but at first it should be practiced only from five to eight minutes, later from ten to fifteen minutes, three times a day perhaps; otherwise, especially at the beginning, so long as the hands and fingers are not accustomed to the method, fatigue ensues which may even prevent the pupil from practicing for a time.

In order that he might understand the physiological reasons for the peculiar effect of his method—for the great fatigue at the beginning and the sure result after a short time—the author applied



to Professor Kronecker, who is at the head of a Physiological Department in the Royal University, and to Dr. Remak, Private Instructor in the University, to whom especially the separate working of every muscle is familiar through the employment of the stimulus of electricity. From these gentlemen he requested some statements. They very kindly informed him that the movements of the muscles of the arms, of the wrist, and of the fingers, (like all movements of the joints,) are most wonderfully combined. Dr. Remak has shown the author how every movement of a joint is conditioned upon the proper co-operation of several muscles, in such a way that not merely the movement which outwardly appears to be aimed at takes place, but also such movements (in the inner structure of the muscles) as take a contrary direction to the one outwardly apparent. So for example when the piano-player only lifts his finger to strike, not merely that muscle is employed which extends the division of the finger lying next to the hand, but also a series of other muscles, which work partly in the opposite direction. A special citation and description of all the muscles which co-operate in piano playing,

would lead us too far, and would by no means promote the purpose of this work.\*

The author therefore, in accordance with the advice of the esteemed gentlemen above mentioned, restricts himself to explaining why that position of the upper arm which his method prescribes is so decided and useful in its effect.

The upper arm is employed in piano-playing inasmuch as it keeps the elbow in position. But the fixed and certain control of the position of the elbow and of the fore-arm by no means depends upon the mere will of the player, but is the result of long habit, practice, and careful attention on the part of the teacher as well as of the pupil.

The *free* carriage of the upper arm, as prescribed to piano players—although perfectly correct relatively—is often, especially in the first years of study, a hindrance to the attainment of a correct position of the fingers, of the hand and of the wrist, because by this free carriage of the upper arm an oblique position of the fore-arm, an incorrect position of the hand, and a very un-

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\* Those who are especially interested in the matter are referred to Prof. H. Meyer's *Manual of Anatomy* (*Lehrbuch der Anatomie*) pp. 105—109, and 226—248.

even raising and depression of the wrist easily take place, without the pupil's being aware of these faults. All this, however, is quite impossible if the upper arm *during practice* is, for a short time, so to speak, robbed of its free movement, and compelled to an unchangeable position. By the contraction imposed upon a part of the muscles of the upper arm the movement of the flexor muscles, likewise situated in the upper arm is in great part hindered, and the player is obliged to give up the motion of the elbow, and to move only the wrist or the fingers, as necessity demands. That the activity of the upper arm may be limited to a considerable extent, the player will most clearly perceive if he presses the upper arm firmly against the body and executes the following passage



Although the hands here move in an opposite direction the upper arm may be kept firmly



fixed. Only when the passage is extended above and below must the upper arms be freed from their constrained position.

After the statements here made it will be evident to the reader that in developing the mechanism of piano playing the chief aim must at first be directed to restricting to the utmost the movements of the upper and fore-arm, and in concentrating all the activity upon the fingers, the hand and the wrist. To control *at the same time* the correct position of the fingers, of the hand and of the wrist, and the proper carriage of the arm is for the learner of the middle grade a very difficult task, only seldom perfectly accomplished after long time and much trouble. The sometimes too straight, sometimes too curved position of the fingers, which often touch the keys first with the middle division of the finger, in other cases with the nails; the outward projection of the elbows, by which means the position of the hand is altered every instant; the drawing of the fore-arm back and forth, whereby the position of the wrist is disturbed so that it can never attain to a uniform movement; the pushing of the upper arm, whereby the hand sometimes comes too far forward on the key-

board, sometimes too near its edge;—all these are faults, each one of which demands to be controlled. By means of the method which is now to be presented, the learner is enabled to master the principal difficulties *in a short time, to prevent the development* of most of the above mentioned faults, and to obtain easy and sure control over the position of the hand, of the wrist and of the arm in practicing. The exceedingly simple fundamental principle of this method consists in this: that while practicing slowly all of the passages which are to be executed with a quiet hand, and all others in which the wrist movement is employed, especially however in the practice of the “Tausig-Ehrlich Daily Studies,” the upper arm should be kept very near to the body, and, wherever possible, close to it. That this position of the upper arm cannot of course be maintained in the more rapid execution of pieces, must here at once be emphasized in order to avoid all misunderstanding. Experience will however teach that a wholly different development of strength results even in the more rapid execution. *In order, then, to give to the arm, and thereby to the fingers and to the wrist, the most correct position, and always to preserve the surest*

*and easiest control over them, we must go to work in the following manner.*

First lay the fingers of both hands flat upon the keys c, e, g, a, c,\* but so that the fleshy part of the finger tips, by no means the nails, may lie upon the keys. It is, of course, understood that the thumb should never lie with its full under surface upon the key, but always be turned somewhat sidewise; but this is not the case with the other fingers. After the fingers have taken their place upon the keys in this manner, let the upper arm be brought with a jerk to the body so that it is firmly joined to it *as far as the elbows*, which, however, must not lie *behind* the body, but *before* it in such a way that the fore-arm is extended from the body at the wall of the ribs. The player must also sit perfectly erect. It will be well for the teacher during several lessons to hold the upper arm of the scholar firmly to the body just at the elbow, taking care that the elbow lies *in front* of the body. It is already apparent by this movement that if the upper arm lies near to the body the fingers *must* take the right position upon the keys. It is *impossible* to hold the

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\* For small hands it is better to take c, d, e, f, g. The thumbs of the two hands of course lie with the outer surface upon the keys.



hand sideways, it is impossible that the fingers should not lie directly over the keys if the forearm is not moved with them sideways. At the moment, therefore, in which the upper arm is placed against the body the position of the wrist is decided. It is *compulsorily correct*. It now remains to give to the fingers which hold c, e, g, a, c, the right position as prescribed by all schools. These, *while they hold the keys firmly* during the whole movement, must be very slowly curved until the fleshy part of the finger-tips rests upon the keys. This curving *cannot* be carried beyond the proper limit because the elbows form the natural barrier, and, *at the moment* when the fingers are too much curved, *move back behind the body*. The position of the upper and forearm as explained above thus forms a *sure foundation* for proper self-control in attaining the right position of the fingers, of the hand and of the wrist. After a few days' use of this method no one can hold the fingers, the hand or the wrist higher than they can be raised of themselves; that is, without raising the arm at the same time, so that a too high as well as a too low position is avoided in the most decided manner. Together with these advantages, which will after a time be

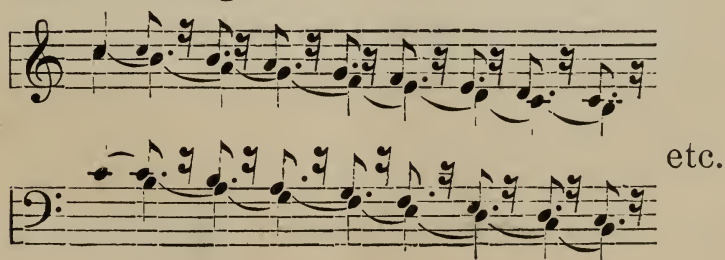
clearly recognized by the learner, this method develops also the strength of the fingers and of the wrist to the utmost extent by the concentration of the strength upon these members. This is best illustrated by a few examples. Let us suppose that the player strikes with both hands somewhat firmly the keys C sharp, D sharp, E sharp, F sharp and G sharp, each five to six times, upward and downward, observing the position of the upper arm which has been prescribed. At the first attempt the fingers perhaps will only press down the keys, instead of striking by rising and falling again in a hammer like way; but in a few minutes the fingers of themselves will be lifted in the proper manner, and if the learner now takes care that the fleshy portion of the finger tips shall fall full upon the keys, which is not difficult to accomplish, he will in a few days acquire the touch, which, to be sure, can be likewise attained by other methods, but only after a longer time, with greater trouble, and with strained attention directed to *various different* points, while in the method here indicated the attention need only be directed to the finger-tips, for the position of the upper arm is secure after from five to eight trials.

It is most useful to practice the exercise described above for the five fingers in all the tonalities which require many black keys as it is more difficult to strike these fully than the white ones.

After these very simple curvings and movements of the fingers have been practiced for a few days, three or four times a day, each time from three to five minutes, I would advise proceeding at once to the practice of the scales, *to the extent of two octaves, beginning with the small octave in the right hand*, and in such a way that one finger always remains upon the key until the next is in full possession of *its* key, thus :



in descending :





Here *the finger which is to strike must be lifted as high as possible*, and must fall with considerable power upon the key with its full fleshy surface, while the other is *firmly* held down. That the upper arm is kept close to the body is of course understood. The reason why I insist that one finger shall always be held down is *very* important. The striking finger must be raised high, in order that it may fall fully and powerfully upon the key. There is danger therefore that in lifting it the wrist will be drawn along with it, but the latter must remain quiet, for only the strength of the fingers is to be employed. The danger indicated may be avoided by keeping down the finger which has struck the last tone. The next finger can raise itself as high as it will, the wrist must remain quiet, *the finger which is held down*, in connection with the elbow resting against the forward portion of the body, prevents its rising. In this exercise it is now apparent that the best legato also may be attained without the least alteration of the position of the hand. In the ascending scale the third or fourth finger of the right hand, since it must be firmly held down until the thumb strikes the next following tone, forms an arch beneath which the thumb

reaches its key very well, without causing the least alteration of the position of the hand. In descending, the third and fourth finger perform a curve over the thumb which is firmly held. What is here said of the right hand applies also to the left, only that with this the arches and curvings follow in the contrary direction, the former in descending, the latter in ascending the scale. The author must here once more direct attention to two important points. First, that *only* slow and precise practice is of real value, and secondly, that this is only a kind of gymnastic exercise which has been treated of, and not at all a system for general use, to be introduced on all occasions.

Whoever has practiced the scales *very slowly* for several weeks in the manner here pointed out, and with the prescribed position of the upper arm and of the elbows, will then be able to execute them in whatever manner, according to whatever directions, far more rapidly and firmly, just as the gymnast who is accustomed to lift the iron dumb-bells slowly (*not* in rapid tempo) from right to left, at a later period can lift far heavier weights if he gives a slight swing of the arm at the same time. Thus whoever executes the scales in slow tempo, tolerably legato and evenly, with

the upper arm firmly fixed, will play them with a freer carriage of the arm very rapidly and correctly, and will only have spent half the time in practice, which he would have needed, if he had not used the method here described.

After the scales have been practiced for a while in this way it is time to proceed to the broken chords; *at the same time, however, some exercises for the wrist should be undertaken.* The broken chords are to be practiced in the same manner as the scales, that is, one key is always to be firmly held while the next following finger is raised in order to strike and then falls powerfully upon the key with the fleshy part of the tip.



The player meets with many difficulties at this point. It is impossible for a piano-player with small hands (it is difficult even for one with long, but unskilled fingers) to keep the upper arm close to the body, and at the same time to play a broken chord *slowly* in the manner indicated above. The fore-arm, and with it the elbow, must take a somewhat oblique sidewise position, by which means the upper arm is necessarily dis-



placed from its firm position against the body. It is much easier to keep this position of the upper arm while playing the broken chords in a rapid tempo, but then of course the firm holding down of the keys must be given up. In the beginning the author always gives the following exercise to be practiced



because in this the intervals are much smaller, and *all* the fingers are employed.

It is undeniable that the legato playing of broken chords (and even of scales) is much more easily and surely executed, when, in passing the thumb under, the hands are turned somewhat right and left, and the elbows are projected outward a little. This ease and security however lasts *only* so long as the passages are to be played piano, or mezzo forte. But to play a broken chord, a running passage formed of broken

chords, or a scale, upwards with the right hand, downwards with the left, forte, or fortissimo, and at the same time to turn the elbows out, is almost as impossible as to give a blow with the clenched fist and at the same time not to keep the upper arm and the elbow near to the body. Try to play the following passage

presto



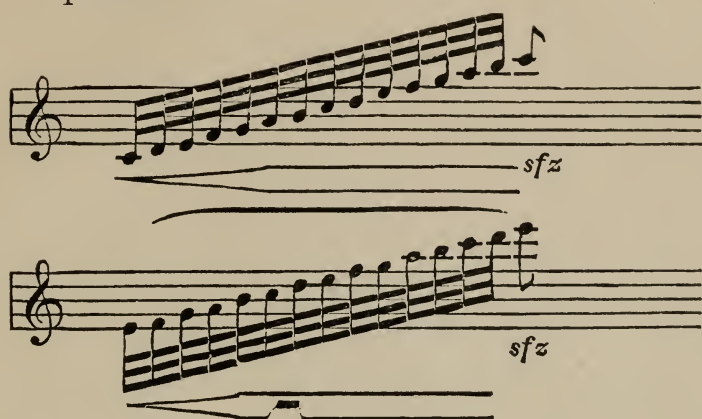
or

presto



u. s. w.

or even only  
presto



in the left hand in contrary motion, and to keep the elbows projecting outward in these passages, and you will at once perceive that the power of the fingers decreases just in proportion as you ascend or descend. Try to play the same passages, keeping the elbows as near as possible to the body, and in front of it, and you will be convinced that the power increases the further the hands diverge from the middle point and the more the upper arm can afford support in the outward tending motion. The author believes that without too much presumption he may recommend his method for the *practice* of broken chords, because it is suitable for every style of execution—for piano and forte. Of course it

presents difficulties, as he remarked in the beginning, especially for small hands, and a *perfectly* firm contact of the upper arm with the body can never be maintained while playing broken chords in a *slow* tempo, but only a position very near the body. In compensation for the difficulties, this method has the very important advantage that it develops the extension (reaching power) of the fingers in the most decided manner, as no other method can. Note well, however, that this is to be accomplished by practicing *slowly*. Whoever has tried this for a time will find himself afterward at home in all positions.

The firm carriage of the upper arm is useful in a still higher degree in the exercises for the wrist which the author urgently advises should be taken up at the same time with the broken chords, both of course *very moderately*, in order to avoid all over-fatigue. Begin at first with repeating the same octave



in both hands very slowly; the wrist must each time be raised as high as possible, but the elbows must remain firm before, and against, the body.

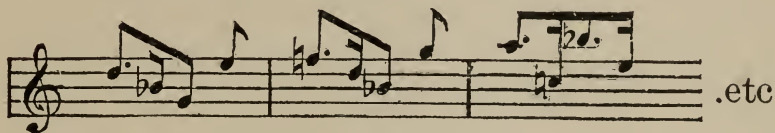


The fingers (the thumb also,) must fall upon the keys with the fleshy part of their tips. At first many inexperienced persons will think that it is not possible to play an octave from the wrist without moving the fore-arm a little. After a short interruption and further resumption of the exercise the most inexperienced and distrustful will be convinced that the hand can very easily be moved at the wrist without lifting the fore-arm and that the difficulty lies chiefly in keeping the upper arm firm. Yet more. Every not wholly unpracticed piano player will of himself experience the following result, which will convince him of the correctness of the method here proposed. If the elbows lie perfectly firm against the anterior wall of the ribs then in the first attempts at playing octave and chord exercises from the wrist the fore-arm will take part, that is, will be raised, but after a few minutes it becomes so tired that only the wrist moves. The fore-arm when held in the position described cannot long take part in the movement and is compelled to remain quiet.

After the first wrist exercises upon the octave C, it is advised to undertake this movement in octaves upon the black keys; after this exercise to pro-

ceed chromatically in such a way that C, C sharp, D, D sharp, E, F, etc., are each struck from four to six times with the fleshy part of the finger tips. It is earnestly advised that even at the very beginning the fourth finger should be used upon the black keys. It will be shown later that this use of the fourth finger is justified by the construction of the hand. After the octaves upon the same keys have been practiced for a time in the manner prescribed—alternating with broken chords—the octave scales may be begun. But only a *very slow* tempo assures the perfectly even rising and sinking of the wrist, as well as equality of power in striking. The author knows from his own experience and from that of many pupils, that uncertainty in octave passages is frequently the result not of insufficient practice, but of the uneven movement of the wrist and of the inequality of touch proceeding from this, and that practicing *very slowly*, keeping the upper and fore-arm perfectly quiet, leads sooner to the goal, that is, to a faultless execution even in rapid tempo, than much longer and more fatiguing repetition in another manner, in which the rising and sinking of the wrist is not compelled to be so even as in the method of the author. He has

quite recently attained several very surprising results with pupils who had previously fatigued themselves much with difficult passages. One could not conquer with certainty the octave passages in the E major Novelette of Schumann; to another the octave leaps in both hands in the D major intermediate movement of the F sharp minor Novelette at the place



offered insurmountable difficulties; a third exhausted himself in vain with the octave passage in contrary motion in Liszt's transcription of the Tannhäuser March



The author caused these places to be practiced *very slowly* ten or twelve times in his presence. At first he held the elbow of the player close to the body, but after the fifth time allowed him to work unaided and even the Tannhäuser passage,

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as written above and played with both hands, was a success.\* After they had employed this manner of practicing three times with short intervals between, that is had played the passages in question about thirty or thirty-six times, they were able to execute them at once with a somewhat freer carriage of the fore-arm in a considerably more rapid tempo with certainty, which they had not succeeded in doing previously at home after almost a hundred careful, but unsystematic, repetitions.

The whole secret of the quick success lay in the circumstance that in consequence of the prescribed position of the upper and fore-arm the wrist alone was in use and was *compelled* to rise and sink evenly. For the chief fault of most pupils in executing octave passages and chord successions in staccato or portamento lies in the *unconsciously* uneven movement of the wrist. They take care indeed not to raise the fore-arm at the same time with the wrist, and in time succeed in gaining proper control of this, but it escapes their notice that they often do *not* raise the wrist and the arm *at all*, and only press down the octaves or

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\* Short arms of course will not be able to remain firmly in position beyond the upper C sharp.



chords, instead of striking them, *in which case they generally* push forward the arm. This fault is impossible with the method here pointed out. *It is true that it is difficult to carry out this method in the practice of wrist exercises, and it should only be used VERY moderately and in slow tempo*, but the author has obtained from it unfailing and astonishingly rapid results, and he confidently hopes that every teacher will test it and likewise recognize its value, especially as it stands in opposition to no other method and is only intended to supplement others.

Whoever has practiced for a time the method here enjoined, the right and proportionate use of which in connection with others, the author will more exactly define at a later period, will often find with surprising certainty the best fingering for even the most difficult places. If a skillful pianist, who has not yet used the method, will take the trouble to press the upper arm firmly against the body, and to try the following passages, whose fingering ordinarily presents some difficulties, he will at once perceive how much easier is the fingering of the author. Let us take a passage from the third variation of the Andante of Beethoven's great F minor Sonata.



(The hand must be held a little forwards towards the name board of the piano.) We shall soon be convinced that the fingering here given is the most convenient *for a perfectly quiet hand*. In the A major sonata op. 101 the author uses the fingering given below at the passage



and many of his scholars, who at first found it exceedingly difficult, and whom he freely permitted to make use of another, at length came to the conclusion that his, after all, was the surest and easiest. In many of the Bach Fugues and Partitas he has by his method found fingerings which considerably facilitate difficult places, also in the G major Nocturne by Chopin, and in the A flat major Ballade, and after he has tried all other modes of fingering he believes that he may say without presumption that his own may be counted among the surest and least difficult. It

very often happens that a fingering which at first appeared most inconvenient, after some practice in comparison with others apparently much less inconvenient and easier, at length proves to be the surest, that is, the one in which there is the least danger of a mistake, of striking neighboring keys, because it keeps the position of the hand firm and unaltered.

Of course the independent formation of the fingering is the *last* stadium of the method here given, and only possible to one who is prepared for it by long practice and experience, and who is perfectly sure of the correct position of the arm.

But the way to the attainment of this certainty is proportionately shorter, and even if more difficult is with due attention infallible; and the author permits himself once again to point out exactly this way which leads to the right goal without causing any other method to be abandoned or superseded, if it is not in and of itself incorrect. Gymnastics, when used with proper moderation, have never injured the correct bearing of a man, but they have indeed interfered with incorrect bearing.

Every one who desires to follow the method here enjoined should take up for eight to ten days the aforementioned single finger exercises, scales, broken chords and octaves very gradually and slowly, in the beginning never longer than from two to five minutes at most, four or five times a day. The chief thing is to accustom the upper arm and the fore-arm to the proper position and to strike the keys firmly with the fleshy part of the finger tips. After eight or ten days these exercises may be taken somewhat longer or — with still greater advantage — more frequently, as from six to eight times a day, always from four to six minutes at a time. For the rest the pupil may practice his *pieces* before and afterward according to the method of his teacher; only the author would advise that *in practicing a PASSAGE slowly, not when executing it in the right tempo* the pupil should hold the upper arm if not quite close, yet as near to the body as possible.

The strength necessarily developed by this means has a most advantageous reflex effect in promoting the independence of the fingers. After two weeks of such preparation by the practice of simple exercises it is time to take up the



“Tausig-Ehrlich Daily Studies.” These must be played throughout according to the method, with the upper arm lying close to, and the elbows pressed firmly against, the body. The tempo must be very slow and only after prolonged practice may it be taken *somewhat* faster. Every tone must be fully struck, the finger always being previously lifted for the purpose. These Daily Studies, especially at first, should not be practised more than five, then eight, or at most ten minutes consecutively, as they otherwise fatigue, relax and strain the hand too much. On the other hand they can and ought to be played frequently during the day. Thus the gymnast takes the iron dumb bells in his hand several times a day in order to exercise and strengthen the muscles of his wrist and arm, but guards himself against exceeding at any one time a carefully estimated limit. The author believes that the longest period of practice should not last beyond ten, fifteen or twenty minutes, but it may be repeated according to the strength and habit of the scholar three, four or even five times a day. That in this case one and the same exercise is not to be taken again and again, but each time a different one it is hardly necessary to inculcate. It must be clear

to everyone that when strength is exerted in various directions it is not exhausted to the same degree as if it were always concentrated on one point.

From the moment that the "Tausig-Ehrlich Daily Studies" are taken up the player is advised—*with the permission of his teacher*—to practice those passages in the pieces which he is studying and which present to him difficulties, from ten to twelve times, very slowly, with a full touch, with the upper arm lying against, and the elbows in front of the body. After that let him always try them again carrying the arm more freely. He will soon be convinced that his execution has gained in certainty, repose and power. Of course patience and perseverance are necessary, for the strain in the beginning is not slight and many players during the first few days will complain of stiff fingers, as the gymnast after his first exercises feels in all his joints an unpleasant stretching and drawing, but in the one case, as in the other, the salutary result will appear after a short time and the pleasure will increase at every advance. As a matter of course, the progress of some will be rapid, of others slow, for there is a special talent for the purely mechan-

ical and technical as well as for the intellectual. No one can deny that the infallible technical skill of the lamented Tausig could not have been attained by incessant practice merely, but was derived in great part from especial natural gifts. That these gifts were cultivated to the highest degree by means of iron diligence is clear, but it is just as clear that another pianist, even working twelve hours a day, could never attain this technical skill, if he had not been gifted like Tausig with very special talents in this direction, uniting at the same time the sense for clearness and rhythm with a perfect mechanism. In like manner also all the violinists in the world might strive in vain to execute a staccato passage with the certainty, purity and inimitable grace and ease which may be called Sarasate's "own." But even the purely mechanical, which might seem only to be the effect of practice, sometimes proceeds from a special endowment. Willmer's trills, Dreyschock's octave passages and pearly runs, the unwearied endurance and strength of Herr Zarebski who has lately appeared—the author intentionally mentions three piano virtuosi whose musical style is quite foreign to his taste—were, and are,

special performances which proceed from a decided natural talent, although one which is not of any great value.

The author can certify from experience that even such scholars as were but little gifted in respect to technical skill, after a period of patient practice of the method here specified all at once showed comparatively sudden progress, while those whose organization—formation of the fingers and wrists—facilitated their mastery of technical difficulties, in a short time attained much greater strength of touch and certainty in the most varied passages.

The author believes that he may confidently recommend his method to the favorable notice of the teacher and to the private study of the amateur with the following remarks which certainly will not be found by intelligent persons to be erroneous.

In our time the mechanical, that is, passage work pure and simple, which has nothing at all to do with touch, rhythm, different kinds of tone coloring, in short with what is properly technical, has taken monstrous strides. Not alone do the modern virtuosi composers, the Herzes, Kalkbrenners, etc., of to-day, make great demands



upon the player in their "Fantasias" (without fantasy), not alone does the yet unrivaled artist Franz Liszt demand the "transcendental" in his concert pieces and études; but first Beethoven in his last Sonatas, then Schumann and Chopin, and now Brahms, Kiel, Kirchner, and others offer in their works the most difficult combinations of runs, trills, passages in thirds and sixths, chord successions in rapid tempo, and octave passages, whose mastery is so much the more troublesome, as the effect is dependent not merely upon technical skill, but in like degree upon expression, upon the intellectual and spiritual element which gives life to the passages. Now it does not need to be explained and demonstrated at length that the great majority of young pianists lay the greatest weight in the scale on the side of technical skill and spend the most time upon it. Hereby the attention is diverted from the intellectual conception and from expression. On the other hand it happens, of course, that many pupils make the latter their chief aim and so neglect the cultivation of technical skill and it remains deficient. It is very seldom the case that mechanical and technical skill and expression are esteemed by a pupil of like importance, and one

may well affirm that *this case* is chiefly the result of unusual talent, that the learner possesses a ready apprehension and a lively imagination and therefore can devote much time to the acquirement of technical skill without injury to his style. The author acts upon the conviction that an equilibrium will best be produced between the purely mechanical exercises and those studies which develop technical skill and expression when, in the scale on the side of the mechanical, little, but *difficult* work is laid, while on the side of the musical *much* is laid; that is, when the *mechanical* exercises are such as are calculated to exert a great strain upon the powers, and although less frequently employed, to develop them on all sides; and when, on the other hand, *so much the more time and attention* is devoted to those exercises which give and confirm exact knowledge of the measure and familiarity with its divisions, which develop the touch, awaken and musically purify the feeling, cultivate the sense of form, arouse the perception, facilitate and promote the recognition of tone forms and prepare the mind for a correct apprehension of the master works of the tone art. Therefore as soon as the pupil has reached the middle grade and, for example, can

begin the first book of "Cramer's Studies" let him have few but *difficult* technical exercises exactly calculated so as to be proportioned to his strength, and *many not difficult pieces*, but such as can and must be well executed.

Let no one say that it is dangerous to begin too early with difficult technical exercises; that the scholar will be fatigued and will become disgusted with music and piano playing; that it is far more necessary first to awaken his love for the art, and then the rest will come of itself; etc.

Whoever is earnest in the study of art, whether amateur or professional student, will not shun a difficulty that leads him more quickly to the goal. And the teacher must on his part understand how to nourish in the young pupil a love for music, even though he places many a difficult task before him. In reference to the necessity of beginning early with difficult tasks the author would like to direct attention to the instruction of the Prussian recruits and to an example from ancient history. If we observe how the Prussian recruits learn to march, how they must first lift the leg high with firmly bent knee, and hold it for a time in this position, how they must stretch the foot out straight with a jerk, again hold it a

moment above the ground, and not until then step on the ground, how they must thus analyze, so to speak, each single step into three parts, while in ordinary life we only lift the foot a little way from the ground and then put it down again, we might at first find this method more strange than useful; indeed many a superficial observer might consider this exercise as useless drudgery for a poor man—for “*as soon as he really marches he never employs this kind of step.*”

But just this very exercise gives to the Prussian soldier firmness and endurance in marching; just because such a strain has been imposed upon all the muscles of his foot during *slow exercise*, is he able later to overcome so easily in more rapid movement the difficulties of a long and fatiguing march. So formerly many Roman soldiers *before* they went to war bound metal soles under their sandals in order that *when* the army set out the wearisome march might seem to be a relief.

( So also when the pianist *in slow practice* employs the most difficult method, one which strains and concentrates his power, he will strengthen in a high degree the muscles of his fingers and will overcome all difficulties of execution with



greater sureness and ease. } For self-indulgent or feeble students of music this method is of course not intended. Every one to-day must bring with him perseverance and a certain amount of strength if he wishes to progress beyond mediocrity in piano playing. That perseverance however and intellectual striving accomplish far more than strength alone the great artists Bülow and Tausig have proved, whose achievements, notwithstanding their delicate physical frames and small hands, have been, and are so magnificent.

In order to learn this method thoroughly and successfully in a short time the "Tausig-Ehrlich Daily Studies" are indispensable because they offer the greatest mass of varied and wholly original mechanical exercises, containing, so to speak, a complete course of piano gymnastics. After the general and unlimited praise which has been paid to these exercises by authorities the most important, most competent and most diverse in their aims, the author believes that he may affirm without presumption that they form the most useful foundation for the system which leads, by means of exercises difficult, but demanding but little time, to a more rapid and general

development of technical skill, and which can therefore devote so much the more time and attention to individual musical and artistic cultivation. In order that these exercises may be rightly practiced in accordance with the spirit of Tausig and the intention of the author of this pamphlet, exact directions are given for each separate number.\*

At the same time the author from his own experience advises those teachers who allow their pupils to practice these "Daily Studies" not to follow strictly in the order given but to take up *several exercises of a different kind* at the same time. The order of the exercises was necessary for the sake of systematic arrangement, but the study of them must be regulated by individual talents. To many scholars, especially to the more advanced, exercises in spanning, or in broken chords, especially the passages in thirds and sixths and the wrist exercises of the second book are to be recommended. Of course the teacher will here be obliged to choose the order to be followed. Learners who are very far advanced will themselves know what is necessary for them.

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\* *Tausig Daily Studies* with German and English annotations for their correct practice, by *H. Ehrlich*; complete in one volume, bound in flexible cover. Price \$3.00. Published by Edward Schuberth & Co., New York.



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